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Vol. 8 NO. 16 - 1978
ISSUE NO. 182

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

ANNUAL INDEX ISSUE

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Berkeley, CA 94709 USA

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LETTERS

During the summer I traveled to Hokkaido by train and ship. The JNR is following the course of the American railways of the 1950's and 1960's: the management's answer to a big deficit is increased fares--and exorbitant fares! Now second class on Shinkansen (bullet trains) is the same as flying; "green" or first class is way over air fares. As a result, trains are running with fewer passengers--green cars often completely empty. This, of course, is on long distance routes. Local trains continue to be packed. Ironically, the fare on the deluxe Tobu Railway from Tokyo to the tourist center of Nikko is 1600 yen. Second class on the uncomfortable JNR trains is 2000 yen and 4000 yen in a "green" car--less comfortable than the one-class Tobu line. There are more and more discontinuances of branch lines and streetcars, but still this is the world's greatest country when it comes to the number of trains running. With the present exchange rate of 175 yen to the dollar, however, Japan is off limits to most railfans. (This letter, at the minimum rate, is 120 yen or almost one dollar.)

Christopher Anderson
Kamakura City, Japan

As 1979 begins I would urge all RTN readers to make three resolutions:

(1) Ride Amtrak as often as possible. Increased ridership and revenue are Amtrak's best arguments to continue the present level of service and to increase service.

(2) Tell your friends, relatives, co-workers, everyone you come in contact with, that Amtrak service is an alternative to traveling by auto or plane. The majority of the public does not realize that Amtrak exists.

(3) Write one letter every week during the new year to your Congressman or one of your Senators or a state official that can be helpful, pointing out that you ride Amtrak, that you are in favor of government support of Amtrak, and ask that person to support Amtrak.

Riding, writing and rhetoric will help Amtrak keep the trains running.

Chuck Vercelli
San Francisco, California

Rio Grande has succumbed to the "conventional wisdom" of the railroad industry regarding passenger trains.

During the past several years, while Rio Grande has run a passenger train at its own expense, it has become one of the most profitable and financially strong railroads in the U.S. This success may be partially attributable to the pride of employees in their company's outstanding train and the operating discipline imposed by the need to run it on schedule. The ZEPHYR has in no way impaired Rio Grande's economic position, and it seems odd that to save a mere $800,000 ($400,000 after taxes?), it wishes to antagonize the public by cutting back the train that ought to be its showpiece. If the cost is deemed too high, it could be reduced to a minimal level thru promotion and improved connections.

I had thought that Rio Grande was different from other railroads. It has been one of the most aggressive and innovative railroads in the industry. It provides a relatively high rate of return to its stockholders, and is highly desired as a merger partner. Running the best passenger train in the country has fit into this

(continued on page 23)

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AMTRAK ISSUES "STATEMENT OF MISSION"

Amtrak should make a "contract" with Congress, with Congress deciding the basic level of service the nation needs and Amtrak agreeing to run the trains at a specified cost, Amtrak's Board of Directors proposed on Dec 13. The recommendation was part of a new Amtrak "Statement of Mission" which was made public at a press conference held in Washington by Amtrak President Alan S. Boyd and Dr. Donald P. Jacobs, chairman of Amtrak's Board of Directors. If the Board's recommendations are adopted, Amtrak "will function essentially as an operating entity with Congress establishing basic structure and financing," the Amtrak officials said. The entire text of the Mission Statement is printed in this issue, starting on page 11.

THE COVER STORY

The Amtrak artist drew in the Amtrak equipment in the arms of this traditional Santa Claus picture, which was published in the first issues, dated Fall 1978, of "The Limited Edition", a small Amtrak publication for Northeast Corridor riders, produced by Sue Stevens of Amtrak's Public Affairs Department. The ornaments above Santa's head picture two non-Amtrak trains about which you'll read more in this issue of RTN. The SOUTHERN CRESCENT photo on the left is of SR train 2 at Birmingham, photographed by Jack Ferry. The scene from a dome of the eastbound RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR near Glenwood Springs was taken by Editor Jim Russell.

RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR CUTBACK DELAYED

RTN has learned that the proposed discontinuance of the Ogden-Grand Junction portion of D&RGW's RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR route has been delayed from the original Jan 31, 1979 date to May 31. The Interstate Commerce Commission ordered the 120-day delay while it studies the railroad's petition. It is believed that public hearings will be held in the case, but none has been set as we go to press. It is believed that most likely they would be held in February or March.

NEW YORK TIMES SUPPORTS AMTRAK CUTBACKS

In a move that shocked rail supporters, the New York Times, which has been consistently supportive of passenger train subsidies since Amtrak's beginning, editorialized on Dec 17 in favor of cutting Amtrak's budget. The editorial began: "Every year the economic rationale for subsidizing long-distance intercity passenger trains grows weaker. Yet every year more tax dollars are voted for Amtrak--lest rail service be discontinued in one Congressional district or another. Now, however, things may be different. The President is determined to hold down spending without crippling essential Federal programs. And Congress is running out of patience with the sprawling 27,000-mile passenger rail system." The editorial concluded: "As the President swings his budget ax, the price of giving tourists a chance to see the Rockies from a parlor car must be measured in public service jobs lost, bridges unrepaired, day-care centers unfunded. By such measures, train service is just too expensive." (See RTN's comments on page 20.)

OIL PRICE RISE EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries at its Dec 16-17 meeting in Abu Dhabi announced an increase in oil prices of 14.5% to be phased in between Jan 1 and Oct 1, 1979. The announcement sent shock waves thru the world's financial leaders. The expected increase had been between 5 and 10%. The Wall Street Journal estimated that the cost of gasoline would rise as much as 8¢ per gallon by Oct 1.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION: A DISSENTING VIEW

by Jefferson Chase

It is axiomatic that capable and dedicated leadership can bet results in a badly structured organization, but even the most rational structure will not produce results under incompetent or uncaring leadership. It is also axiomatic that when you don't have the first foggy notion of how to solve the problem, you play with the organization chart so your superiors and the public will think that you are really doing something about it. Both of these axioms apply to the proposal for creating a Surface Transportation Administration.

Combining the Federal Highway Administration with the Urban Mass Transit Administration because both modes of transportation operate on the surface of the earth makes as much sense as merging the International Harvester Company with the Sunbeam Electric Razor Company because they both make machines used by males to cut growing stalks--and that analogy is amazingly close to transportation reality. Harvesters and highways are both necessary to the economy but both are used only indirectly by our largely urban population most of the time. The average man uses highways directly about as often as he uses his I-H lawnmower--once every week or two when he feels like it for purposes only marginally useful to society as a whole. But he uses urban mass transit like he uses his Sunbeam razor--every day because he has to go to work. (Even most people who drive to work do not do so on the Interstate Highway System; they use local streets and roads, a form of urban and suburban transportation.)

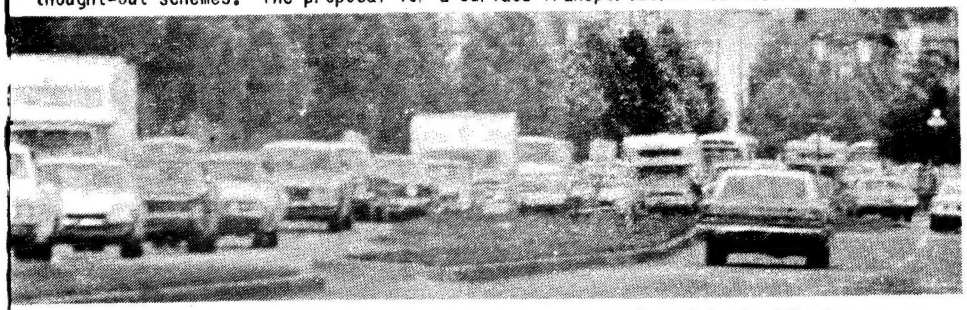
Highways are also, like harvesters, primarily a rural tool with a few rather limited uses--truck, bus, auto, and recreational vehicle--in only one mode. But urban transportation is just that--urban--the opposite of rural, and is composed of at least 15 separate transportation functions in five different modes--rail, rubber, foot, water (ferries), and even air (helicopters)--and all these uses and modes are physically intertwined and closely related, and sometimes interchangeable.

Reorganizing the Department of Transportation by mode is clearly not relevant to the daily transportation life of either individuals or commerce. It is a simple-minded playing with the organization chart that seems logical only to those with a hasty superficial interest in the subject. Function would be a far more useful criterion for organizing the inter-city transportation responsibilities of the Department, since the method of operation of the very same mode of transportation differs drastically according to whether it is being used for passengers or freight. But urban transportation of all types should be planned and supervised by the same urban, not rural, cadre because in an urban setting the different uses of transportation are so closely related and physically intertwined that when not properly coordinated they literally get in each other's way. There is no room for childish chauvinism in favor of one particular mode.

If something must be reorganized, changing UMTA to UTA (expanding the responsibilities of UMTA to cover all modes of transportation in urban areas) is the only thing worth the effort at this time--and this one simple change would in fact accomplish the alleged goals of the proposed Surface Transportation Administration, since the only place mass transit and highways co-exist is in urban areas anyway. A salutary related effort would be to require a reduction in the overloaded Federal Highway Administation bureaucracy until it reaches the same proportion of personnel to funding as UMTA, which would mean cutting its staff by two-thirds. UMTA manages a $3-billion budget using a staff of only 600, with 150 in field offices, while FHA handles a budget of $8 billion using 4900 employees, with 3200 in field offices.

This unjustifiable disparity may in fact be the real reason behind the proposed merger--to save the dead wood in the FHA from President Carter's budget ax simply by claiming that they are now working on mass transit. (And with all the civic and environmental challenges to new highways in the past ten years, these men have in fact been doing cbse to nothing.) It is also a way of preserving the primacy of highway planning in a department under increasing pressure to emphasize mass transit, for when 4900 people merge with 600 people it doesn't take a genius to figure out which group will dominate the management and planning of the new agency.

But the real problem in transportation, at every level, is that the people who administer the relevant government agencies are not themselves actual daily users of the facilities under their purview, and by and large they do not even consult in any meaningful way with those who are actual users before concocting their ill-thought-out schemes. The proposal for a Surface Transportation Administration is



How would the STA cope with urban transportation problems like traffic jams on Berkeley's University Avenue? Photo by Message Media.

a case in point. For while the DOT appears to be soliciting outside comments on this proposal, they are already in the process of merging the two agencies on the local level. They are collecting outside criticism only to prepare themselves to answer those arguments at Congressional hearings. Their real intentions may be read in the fact that they are allowing only two scant months for submission of comment on a proposal of such far-reaching impact--with that short period including Thanksgiving and Christmas. They obviously intend to try to rush it thru before most people are even aware of it.

All of which brings us back to the original point--that the type of people running the system is more important than the type of system. Until the regular daily users have some kind of control over, or at least some meaningful input into, the making of transportation policy, no benefit will result from any reorganization plan, least of all this one.

(Mr. Chase is former Vice-chairman of Better Transportation for New York)

UMTA WILL HOLD regional meetings to discuss methods of improving transit productivity and performance. The 2-day meetings will be in Los Angeles Jan 10-11, San Francisco Feb 6-7, Atlanta Mar 14-15, Detroit Apr 9-10, and Boston May 21-22.

SOUTH SHORE RAILROAD in Chicago is over a stumbling block to federal funds for new cars. A labor agreement was approved Dec 14 that permits the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District to apply for federal funds for new equipment. It is expected that 20-30 new electric cars similar to the SEPTA Silverliners will be ordered, and the 20 best present cars rebuilt. New cars will permit major scheduling changes, with trains running every half hour between Chicago, Gary and Michigan City, with hourly service restored to South Bend. The rebuilt cars would be used for standby service and rush hours.

THE WASHINGTON METRO'S board of directors voted Dec 7 to speed up construction of the Silver Spring-Glenmont line so it will open in 1985 instead of 1986, if the funds become available. A 7-mile subway spur from Greenbelt to Fort Totten Sta-

tion also will be built, the board decided. More passenger entrances to some stations, and expanded parking lots will also be forthcoming, the board agreed.

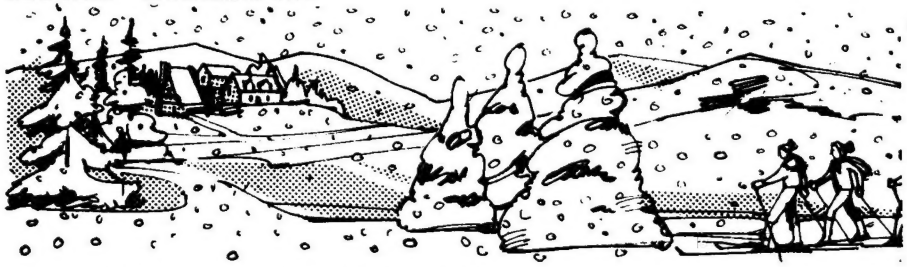
BART'S NEW DIRECTOR, replacing Frank Herringer who last June announced his resignation effective Dec 31, is C. Keith Bernard, according to a Dec 19 announcement. Bernard, 40, is being promoted from the post of director of planning, budgeting and research for BART. He came to work for BART in 1970 after an engineering job in Australia and work with CN Railway and with Expo 67 in Montreal. John H. Kirkwood was elected president of BART's board of directors on Dec 14.

CHICAGO'S BN COMMUTER line is to have 4 more trains added on Jan 1, 1979.

CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY'S 1979 budget will require a 28% increase in subsidies because of inflation, butno fare increase or service cuts are planned.

CHICAGO CITIZENS GROUP will not press to add the Loop L to the National Register of Historic Places. Doing so would block federal funding for its removal.

RAIL CANADA



CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION'S Preferred Plan for passenger train service in the Maritimes was made known on Dec 18. Rail supporters were pleased to learn that the CTC "came down squarely on the side of the train users." The CTC, citing such factors as relative economic depression in the Maritimes, the promise of rail service when the Maritime provinces entered Confederation, and the relatively low auto ownership and higher public transport use in the region, recommended that two long distance routes operate between Montreal and the Maritimes: over the CN line along the south shore of the St. Lawrence River thru Campbellton and Moncton; and over the CP route thru Sherbrooke and Saint John. The latter (overnight) service will not terminate in Saint John, but will be extended to Moncton and Halifax via the CN line east of Saint John. The CTC said the intention is for that train to carry the majority of the long distance transcon traffic between Nova Scotia and Central Canada. The overnight service on the CN line, while running only to Moncton, could be extended to Halifax during peak periods.

The CTC plan called also for connections with the transcon trains at Matapedia for Gaspe and at Truro for Sydney, using RDC equipment. (The transcon trains are to offer "the full range of on-board services.") Connecting buses between Fredericton and Fredericton Junction and between Amherst and Charlottetown will continue.

Besides the long distance and connecting trains, short distance service is called for in the plan. The region between Montreal and Mont Joli, and that in Northeastern New Brunswick between Campbellton and Moncton, both require a daytime rail service, the CTC concluded. "A daytime rail service will be provided to both regions, either with a continuous Montreal to Moncton train running during the daytime, or with separate daytime trains between Montreal and Mont Joli and between Campbellton and Moncton." The decision concerning a continuous train or separate ones will lie with VIA Rail Canada. "There will also be service between Halifax, Moncton and Saint John and between Sydney, Truro and Halifax." The CTC said these services, using RDC's, should run opposite to the transcon schedules.

A "major marketing and promotional effort" should accompany the implementation of the Plan, said the CTC. The CTC also supported the acquisition of new equipment for the trains, and said the plan should be put into effect in late April.

TRANSPORT 2000 CANADA appeared generally pleased with the CTC's Preferred Plan for Maritimes service. President Harry Gow said that the plan was excellent in its rebuttal of the CART-MOT study, which earlier had alleged that rail subsidies were high enough to justify abandonment of one of the CN or CP lines, leaving one Montreal-Halifax train, and substituting bus and air for everything else. He noted that the plan is silent on the fate of DAR connections, and vague about the old CN Intercolonial line. In Transport 2000's view, the Montreal-Moncton train should go thru to Halifax (a decision that VIA will have to make). Substitution of RDC's for thru cars is a fair trade-off, Gow said, but he wondered where all the required RDC's will come from. Would they possibly be provided by abandonments in Western Canada? Implementation in Apr 1979 is far too soon, Gow said, and he suggested phasing it in by starting with the cutback of the SCOTIAN to Moncton and running the "SUPER ATLANTIC LIMITED" thru to Halifax in April.

CTC'S PREFERRED PLAN for the Maritimes has a provision for interested parties to make comments in writing before the CTC issues its Final Plan. Send them before March 1, 1979 to: Secretary of the Railway Transport Committee, Canadian Transport Commission, Ottawa, Ontario K1A ON9.

THE ARTWORK ABOVE is from a current ad for "Le p'tit train du nord" ski train which runs weekends under VIA auspices from Montreal to Labelle and Mont Laurier. For information, telephone VIA in Montreal at 861-7311.

THE TRAVEL SITUATION in Eastern Canada two days before Christmas was reported by a correspondent as "foggy". Storms continuing from the previous week were cancelling airline flights. Air Canada, thru lack of pilots, had already dropped a number of flights. Voyageur Bus in Quebec (but not in Ontario or parts of Western Quebec)was on strike, with drivers not agreeing on the exact formula for conversion from mileage bonus to straight time. Montreal ticket sellers were also on strike--the third strike at Voyageur this year. The bus company talks of "subsidies" to VIA as a threat. Thousands of Quebeckers were being dumped just before Christmas, and many of them have no more train service or are faced with trying to get a seat on trains which have been reserved solid for Christmas for at least 2 or 3 weeks. VIA added no extra runs, due to no extra equipment, and seems to have leased none from GO or ONR. Ticket agents at Ottawa say this is the heaviest-booked Christmas on trains in memory.

QUEBEC GOVERNMENT GRANT of $2.5 million for CN suburban services in Montreal expires Jan 1, 1979, and CN has announced that it will raise fares on the commuter runs by 25%. Transport Minister Otto Lang pleaded with CN not to make any changes in the Montreal area lines immediately. CN threatens to abandon the service, and the government is not fulfilling its 1976 campaign promises to increase transit support. A report to the Montreal regional government has recommended transit authority takeover of the CN and CP suburban lines.

CONRAIL HAS APPLIED to return to the original TH&B-Conrail route via Welland-Port Colborne-Ft. Erie-Buffalo for TH&B RDC cars. The RTC granted this application, so the Dayliners never changed to the Niagara Falls destination.

train of the year

RTN's Third Annual Train-of-the-Year Award, for 1978, goes to the SOUTHERN CRESCENT.

The purpose of the annual award is to draw attention to the one train that in the opinion of RTN has contributed most to advancing the cause of rail travel in the past year. This year's award, to the last passenger train run by Southern Railway, is the first given to a non-Amtrak train.

The continuation of fine traditional on-board service by the Southern has been highly inspirational to rail travelers to remind them of the high quality service that is possible on long distance passenger trains and that once was taken for granted on many of the nation's long-haul rail runs.

The era of the SOUTHERN CRESCENT began on Jan 4, 1891 with the inaugural of the WASHINGTON AND SOUTHWESTERN VESTIBULED LIMITED of the Richmond and Danville Railroad. In 1894, with the formation of the Southern Railway, the train became known as the WASHINGTON AND SOUTHWESTERN LIMITED, and in 1906 as the NEW YORK AND NEW ORLEANS LIMITED. The CRESCENT LIMITED name was introduced in 1925--the train being named after New Orleans, the Crescent City--with the first run with new equipment on Apr 26. The train name was shortened to CRESCENT on Apr 30, 1938, and in late 1969 or early 1970 it became the SOUTHERN CRESCENT.

With the coming of Amtrak in 1971, Southern Railway, along with Rio Grande and Rock Island, elected not to join Amtrak and were required to operate their own passenger trains. The Southern worked closely with Amtrak, and operated thru Amtrak cars from the SUNSET LIMITED. Finally the railway decided that it could not go it alone and after many months of negotiation, on Dec 13, 1978 the announcement came that Amtrak would take over the SOUTHERN CRESCENT effective Feb 1, 1979. By chance the announcement came just ten days after a disastrous derailment of the northbound CRESCENT that killed six people and injured about 60--most of the 77 passengers and crew aboard.

The southbound SOUTHERN CRESCENT, SR train 1, at Birmingham. Photo by Jack Ferry.

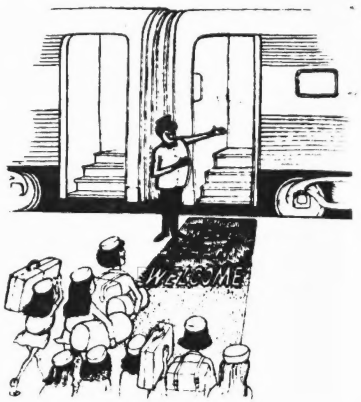
Passenger train supporters will be watching with great interest the changeover to Amtrak operation, and Amtrak planned a meeting of a special task force on Jan 2 to coordinate plans for the takeover.

In making this award, RTN seeks to honor all those associated with the continued quality operation of this train and to call attention to the fact that it has inspired rail travelers to renew their support for passenger trains in general.

CRESCENT STILL STANDS FOR HOSPITALITY
by Peter Roehm

On December 14, the day after the announcement that the Southern Railway would join Amtrak, Eric Watson and I boarded the SOUTHERN CRESCENT at Atlanta for its daily dash to Washington.

The agent was waiting. Our tickets had already been prepared for a "Two bedroom en suite in lieu of Master Room, account Car 240 not in service on this date account derailment, authority C. Smith, PS&S." The December 3 accident had done in one of the 3 Master Room-equipped cars on Southern's roster. But Southern gave us the bedroom suite for the lower Master Room price. They did not have to do this; they could have just given us a bedroom and let it go at that. Now we had, of a sort, the Master Room without the hot shower. The agent was easy-going, Southern-style in his opening statement to us of "We have some good news and we have some bad news." The bad news we expected, the good we did not, but that's the Southern!



Orin Kell, Southern's Director of Passenger Sales and Services, was at the station that night--he was occupying office car #8--and I thanked him for Southern's concern for us. Even so close to the end.

Just after 7:00 comes the first line to "I hear that train a'comin'", followed by "Ladies and gentlemen, Southern Railway's train number two, the SOUTHERN CRESCENT, for ... Washington, and points north..." and a discouragingly few passengers, probably three dozen, went thru the gate and down the stairs to train #2. And it left right on time. Period.

Needless to say, the CRESCENT was spotless. Everywhere! Yes, all of the windows were "squeaky clean"--no opaque Lexan here. Three engines and 12 cars requesting your presence on board. Our sleeper, one of three "River" series on the train, was the "Pacolet River", #2008. Our bedroom suite was E and F, and it was so clean it looked almost new, with no frayed edges anywhere.

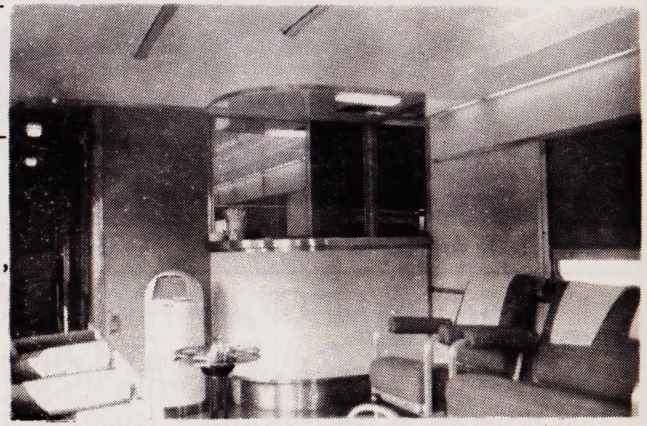
Soon we walked thru three immaculate but lightly patronized coaches to the CRESCENT's dining room. Not an ash here or gum wrapper there in those coaches. Ah, the diner! The steward and three young waiters of grace and civility greeted us to a room moderately busy with the "dinner crowd" with an aplomb customary of quality dining rooms on rails recalled from years past. My roast prime rib au jus, tender, juicy, and cooked exactly to order, was one of the finest I have tasted in some while, and I so complimented the chef after dinner.

After such a fine dinner we adjourned to the coach-lounge for a few hands of cribbage and a drink or two, and then returned to our suite to retire in deep slumber as the green-while-silver ensemble sped north thru the Caroline night. Somewhere north of Charlotte we lost an hour, but it had not affected our sleep, as we arose before dawn to prepare for one of those Southern breakfasts.

We were seated by 6:15, and shortly thereafter we slowed to 10mph as we passed

the accident scene, where maintenance of way vehicles were still working, and where one of the fatally injured had been Lewis Price, Chef Extraordinaire, who won acclaim in a Southern Railway ad for advising "I cook just about everything on the train--even your breakfast muffins..." Shortly afterward we had some of those bran muffins and those ham-packed omelets. Even after Mr. Price's passing and the imminent demise of Southern service, the good things in life on a train are still there on the CRESCENT.

We arrived an hour late and transferred to the Manhattan Transfer Metro.



Interior of Southern Railway coach-lounge. Photo by Jack Ferry.

The CRESCENT is now nearing its end as a privately-operated quality luxury train. Alan Boyd, Amtrak's President, is quoted in the Atlanta Journal (Dec 14) with: "We recognize that the CRESCENT is an institution in the area it serves and we intend to see that it remains one of America's finest long distance trains." Well, we'll see about that when the time comes. Santa Fe felt that Amtrak had not sufficiently maintained the character and integrity of its SUPER CHIEF that it recalled the famous name from use. Southern should remain as diligent.

The SOUTHERN CRESCENT is one of those trains that we will really miss. The Southern passenger folks went all out for us and to them we are grateful for one last and beautiful remembrance of how it used to be and still was in one corner of the land as the seventh decade of the century neared its end. Nineteen-eighty and beyond? The jury remains out.

CONSIST OF PETE'S TRAIN: Three E units, baggage 3589, sleeper 2019 "Tugalo River", coaches 826, 824, coach-lounge 950, diner 3869, coaches 830, 828, 842, sleeper 2008 "Pacolet River", sleeper 2014 "Shenandoah River", office car 8.

CRESCENT DERAILMENT: A FURTHER REPORT

Since our report on the Dec 3 derailment of the northbound SOUTHERN CRESCENT (last issue), further information has come in. Of the 6 people killed, 4 were passengers and 2 were crew. Lewis Price, the chef pictured in Southern Railway newspaper and magazine ads, was, as we noted, among the fatalities. Columnist Lewis Grizzard in the Atlanta Constitution (Dec 6) wrote a touching and informative eulogy to Mr. Price. The 64-year-old chef began in that job in 1941. He lived in Atlanta and was born in Athens GA. He left a wife and 5 children. He was preparing breakfast at the time of the fatal derailment. Mary Stewart Hammond, who is described as writing a book about the train, had an article about Mr. Price in the Dec 26 New York Times. The other crew fatality was flagman Howard Lewis Jackson of Alexandria VA.

(continued on page 20)

Lewis Price

THE AMTRAK MISSION STATEMENT BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS, DEC. 13

The National Railroad Passenger Corporation, brought into being by Congress in 1970, was perceived by many different groups in many different ways...

During the ensuing eight years, much has been tried, much has been learned. Today, thanks to the Amtrak experience of the last several years, we as a Board can say with some confidence what the mission and purpose of Amtrak should be. With the value of hindsight, we conclude that a statement of mission would have been difficult, perhaps impossible, to articulate without first going thru the experience of recent years. It is clear to the Board of Amtrak that the time has arrived when articulation of such a statement is not only desirable, but mandatory if Amtrak is to achieve its potential.

The statement that follows breaks into three broad parts. The first part deals with the major policy areas facing Amtrak and expresses the Board's view on what the solution should be to insure that Amtrak will be successful in serving the national interest. The second section outlines some persistent and major obstacles to the success of the Amtrak venture. These obstacles, altho well known to Amtrak's Board and Management, have in the past been either misunderstood or ignored by the Congress, Executive Branch and the public at large. The final section indicates the Board's view as to why Amtrak merits continued public support.

A. THE MAJOR POLICY ISSUES

This first part examines several major policy issues. The Board considers these issues to be of the highest priority but it does not consider this list to be exhaustive.

*ROUTES

In Section 4(a) of the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978, Congress has established the following five criteria to be used in developing route recommendations:

1. Unique characteristics of rail.
2. Energy conservation.
3. Relationship of benefits to cost.
4. Adequacy of alternative modes.
5. Market and population.

The Board has a responsibility to advise the Congress as to what it believes to be the optimum basic network.

Following the Congressional establishment of the basic network, the Board believes that Amtrak should be vested with authority to make additions to or deletions from the network and that it should employ as its criteria for such changes the "route criteria" developed by the Board in 1975 and approved by Congress. To the extent that existing Amtrak resources would permit adding service without need for specific further public funding, Amtrak should be empowered to do so. On the other hand, if additional public funding is necessary to commence such service, Amtrak should make explicit request to Congress for further appropriation by route, indicating the reasons for the request and detailing the criteria employed in reaching such conclusion.

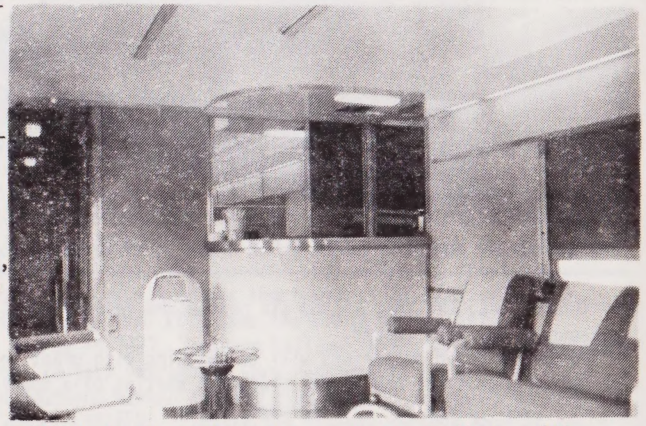
All of the above should be done pursuant to the "contractual" approach outlined in the following section.

*FINANCING

There are only two sources of funds: fares and public financing. The Board believes the most effective method of handling public financing is thru the establishment of a contractual relationship with Congress. Under such a system, the Board would operate the mandated basic system for an agreed-upon grant of funds. The level of funding would be determined taking into account expected costs of providing a quality product thru an efficiently managed organization. This new form of contractual relationship would provide clear efficiency incentives to Amtrak and clear indications of management's performance to the Congress.

the accident scene, where maintenance of way vehicles were still working, and where one of the fatally injured had been Lewis Price, Chef Extraordinaire, who won acclaim in a Southern Railway ad for advising "I cook just about everything on the train--even your breakfast muffins..." Shortly afterward we had some of those bran muffins and those ham-packed omelets. Even after Mr. Price's passing and the imminent demise of Southern service, the good things in life on a train are still there on the CRESCENT.

We arrived an hour late and transferred to the Manhattan Transfer Metro.



Interior of Southern Railway coach-lounge. Photo by Jack Ferry.

The CRESCENT is now nearing its end as a privately-operated quality luxury train. Alan Boyd, Amtrak's President, is quoted in the Atlanta Journal (Dec 14) with: "We recognize that the CRESCENT is an institution in the area it serves and we intend to see that it remains one of America's finest long distance trains." Well, we'll see about that when the time comes. Santa Fe felt that Amtrak had not sufficiently maintained the character and integrity of its SUPER CHIEF that it recalled the famous name from use. Southern should remain as diligent.

The SOUTHERN CRESCENT is one of those trains that we will really miss. The Southern passenger folks went all out for us and to them we are grateful for one last and beautiful remembrance of how it used to be and still was in one corner of the land as the seventh decade of the century neared its end. Nineteen-eighty and beyond? The jury remains out.

CONSIST OF PETE'S TRAIN: Three E units, baggage 3589, sleeper 2019 "Tugalo River", coaches 826, 824, coach-lounge 950, diner 3869, coaches 830, 828, 842, sleeper 2008 "Pacolet River", sleeper 2014 "Shenandoah River", office car 8.

CRESCENT DERAILMENT: A FURTHER REPORT

Since our report on the Dec 3 derailment of the northbound SOUTHERN CRESCENT (last issue), further information has come in. Of the 6 people killed, 4 were passengers and 2 were crew. Lewis Price, the chef pictured in Southern Railway newspaper and magazine ads, was, as we noted, among the fatalities. Columnist Lewis Grizzard in the Atlanta Constitution (Dec 6) wrote a touching and informative eulogy to Mr. Price. The 64-year-old chef began in that job in 1941. He lived in Atlanta and was born in Athens GA. He left a wife and 5 children. He was preparing breakfast at the time of the fatal derailment. Mary Stewart Hammond, who is described as writing a book about the train, had an article about Mr. Price in the Dec 26 New York Times. The other crew fatality was flagman Howard Lewis Jackson of Alexandria VA.

(continued on page 20)

Lewis Price

THE AMTRAK MISSION STATEMENT BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS, DEC. 13

The National Railroad Passenger Corporation, brought into being by Congress in 1970, was perceived by many different groups in many different ways...

During the ensuing eight years, much has been tried, much has been learned. Today, thanks to the Amtrak experience of the last several years, we as a Board can say with some confidence what the mission and purpose of Amtrak should be. With the value of hindsight, we conclude that a statement of mission would have been difficult, perhaps impossible, to articulate without first going thru the experience of recent years. It is clear to the Board of Amtrak that the time has arrived when articulation of such a statement is not only desirable, but mandatory if Amtrak is to achieve its potential.

The statement that follows breaks into three broad parts. The first part deals with the major policy areas facing Amtrak and expresses the Board's view on what the solution should be to insure that Amtrak will be successful in serving the national interest. The second section outlines some persistent and major obstacles to the success of the Amtrak venture. These obstacles, altho well known to Amtrak's Board and Management, have in the past been either misunderstood or ignored by the Congress, Executive Branch and the public at large. The final section indicates the Board's view as to why Amtrak merits continued public support.

A. THE MAJOR POLICY ISSUES

This first part examines several major policy issues. The Board considers these issues to be of the highest priority but it does not consider this list to be exhaustive.

*ROUTES

In Section 4(a) of the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978, Congress has established the following five criteria to be used in developing route recommendations:

1. Unique characteristics of rail.
2. Energy conservation.
3. Relationship of benefits to cost.
4. Adequacy of alternative modes.
5. Market and population.

The Board has a responsibility to advise the Congress as to what it believes to be the optimum basic network.

Following the Congressional establishment of the basic network, the Board believes that Amtrak should be vested with authority to make additions to or deletions from the network and that it should employ as its criteria for such changes the "route criteria" developed by the Board in 1975 and approved by Congress. To the extent that existing Amtrak resources would permit adding service without need for specific further public funding, Amtrak should be empowered to do so. On the other hand, if additional public funding is necessary to commence such service, Amtrak should make explicit request to Congress for further appropriation by route, indicating the reasons for the request and detailing the criteria employed in reaching such conclusion.

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There are only two sources of funds: fares and public financing. The Board believes the most effective method of handling public financing is thru the establishment of a contractual relationship with Congress. Under such a system, the Board would operate the mandated basic system for an agreed-upon grant of funds. The level of funding would be determined taking into account expected costs of providing a quality product thru an efficiently managed organization. This new form of contractual relationship would provide clear efficiency incentives to Amtrak and clear indications of management's performance to the Congress.

*PRODUCTIVITY

The Board recognizes the public perception that rail labor may be less than fully productive. However, the issue is considerably more complicated than such a simple statement would suggest. In addition to the labor issue, part of the problem has to do with not-yet-entirely-corrected inefficiencies in management.

Some additional problems affecting productivity and cost control are:

(1) Amtrak does not negotiate the terms and conditions of employment for the operating craft employees. The aim of Amtrak should be to develop a set of uniform terms and conditions for those persons who operate trains, but subject to the operating requirements of the contracting railroads.

(2) Amtrak costs are inflated by protective guarantees to employees no longer working, as required by contract or law.

(3) Productivity may be adversely affected by limited track access.

(4) Productivity may be adversely affected by antiquated and restrictive work rules. These rules must be identified and eliminated.

(5) Amtrak needs to develop a compensation system that is fair but one that permits efficient performance.

(6) Amtrak needs more control over operations and should be a full party to all negotiations affecting Amtrak operations.

*COMMUTATION SERVICE

The basic mission of Amtrak is to operate intercity rail passenger service. The provision of commuter service will degrade Amtrak's basic service. Should a public policy decision be made to impose commuter operations on Amtrak, compensation for the full costs must be provided.

*U.S. DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION

The Department is in a difficult, if not impossible, position as both a member of the Amtrak Board and as an assigned agency of government exercising public oversight over budgetary and policy decisions. There is strong sentiment on the Board that the Department of Transportation should not occupy a voting seat on the Amtrak Board. Others believe that despite what may be a conflict of interest, the Secretary of Transportation should retain a seat on the Board, as presently provided by law.

*CONGRESS

Historical approaches with regard to funding, route structure, levels of service, and the like, have contributed to a most difficult situation for the Congress. Very properly, members of Congress are concerned with both geographic and overall societal concerns. To improve this situation, the Board has made several recommendations under both routes and financing (above). If these recommendations are followed, Amtrak will essentially function as an operating entity with Congress establishing basic structure and financing.

*TRACK

Poor Amtrak service is often directly attributable to poor track, usually caused by under-maintenance and related slow orders. This problem falls into two broad classifications: (1) track that Amtrak owns; and (2) track belonging to certain contracting railroads.

(1) The Northeast Corridor Improvement Project will provide good track, but the program now underway will not be completed for several years. Thus, public policy decisions relative to an important part of Amtrak operations have already been made, but expectations, particularly with regard to the timing of their impact, should be kept realistic. Moreover, additional funding may be required to complete the project.

(2) With regard to track under control of contracting railroads, the issue is more difficult. Upgrading of such track requires substantial amounts of money not available to some railroads at this time. Such upgrading is a necessity if Amtrak is to provide effective service.

*EQUIPMENT

Amtrak, from its inception, has had equipment problems. Much of the passenger equipment it acquired was old and sometimes badly maintained. Widespread shifts in equipment throughout the Amtrak system exacerbated the problem because many of the existing maintenance personnel were unfamiliar with the equipment that they were assigned to work on.

As Amtrak increasingly modernizes and standardizes its fleet, some of the present major maintenance problems will be reduced. Amtrak continues, however, to suffer from uneven quality of its maintenance facilities, and in some cases poorly trained and inadequately supervised personnel.

A further major problem is the lack of a strong United States railroad passenger equipment supply industry. This places constraints upon Amtrak's ability to acquire new equipment and, more importantly, to develop new technology. Amtrak's equipment situation would be appreciably improved if, as a matter of policy, the government gave better support to the development of new technology in the American industry or if, as a matter of policy, Amtrak was not constrained to buy only from an American supplier.

Obviously, Amtrak will need substantial capital to overcome equipment problems. The organization must develop a well-documented case to support requests for capital funding. Planning will preclude the necessity for frequent small capital requests and will enable both Amtrak management and the various branches of government to better appreciate the Amtrak capital plans in their proper, long-term context.

B. OBSTACLES

An enterprise for profit would typically be concerned with producing and selling a product. To do this, it must develop an organization with capability to design and efficiently produce the product to be vended. The product must attract sufficient customers to secure an adequate return to cover costs and a profit. By virtue of the public service nature of Amtrak, it cannot be held to this standard. Because of this, it is impossible to measure the efficiency of management by normal yardsticks.

Even without the market test, it is clear the purchasers of Amtrak services have not been satisfied. More correctly, the users, actual and potential, have been rightfully disappointed with the product supplied. By the same token, the vendors of services to Amtrak have not developed the respect for the organization which would induce them to put forth their best efforts.

Altho the product deserves criticism, it should be understood that no management could avoid under existing circumstances substantial product failure. In the main, Amtrak inherited old equipment of diverse origin; it relies on a roadbed which has a large part of the system in bad repair; it inherited a work force trained in widely disparate operating procedures; it has undergone dramatic change in operating authority; it does not control substantial parts of its operations, and on and on.

All interested parties--consumers, employees, management, DOT, Congress, and equipment suppliers--have been disappointed. Amtrak has not lived up to expectations and has not captured as large a portion of the market as could have been expected.

Amtrak internally is facing management problems. Highly qualified personnel are often beyond reach because of compensation limits. Morale is undermined because of Amtrak's uncertain future and manifold operating difficulties, many of which are beyond Amtrak's control.

A major operating difficulty has been Amtrak's inheritance of old, obsolete, and badly maintained passenger equipment. In trying to keep its cars in operation, including diners and sleeping cars in short supply, Amtrak at first relied upon contracting railroads for maintenance, but it gradually assumed this function itself, acquiring old railroad facilities manned by railroad personnel. This takeover program had more than its share of start-up problems and only slowly is a coordinated maintenance program beginning to emerge. The maintenance of air-conditioning equipment has been a special problem, and progress has been exasperatingly slow. The introduction of new equipment, headend power, and modern air-conditioning equipment for installation in the older cars will help.

A clear and understandable fare policy for Amtrak does not exist. This is of special importance because

Amtrak is free of all economic regulation in fixing its prices. The marketing function must be developed to the point where the separate and distinct conditions in the several Amtrak operating regions can be dealt with realistically in providing and pricing its services.

Amtrak must improve its credibility in dealing with Congress and public authorities and respond positively to criticism in the press and from the public. This task is complicated by the fact that, in many circumstances, poor service on Amtrak trains is directly traceable to the contracting railroads. It is essential that these railroads acquire and maintain a sense of Amtrak's mission in developing rail passenger transportation service for the country.

As noted above, Amtrak will face a number of critical problems in the near term, and the ultimate resolution of these problems will plainly determine the future of the organization. If the present situation persists without substantial improvement, there is no reason to believe that Amtrak will survive for much longer in its present form.

Some have contended that the problems currently facing the organization are so grave as to actually threaten the survival of intercity rail passenger transportation in the United States. However, given the fact that rail transportation will, for a long while to come, remain as a strong alternative mode of transportation (due to potential fuel economics, speed, convenience, and comfort), it is unlikely that intercity rail passenger transportation will fail to survive. Rather, it is more likely that Amtrak will be "nationalized" if it is unable to improve on existing operations.

However, the nationalization of Amtrak surely is no panacea for the problems inherent in the organization. For one thing, there is no reason to believe that Amtrak will run better under the weight of yet another federal bureaucracy. For another thing, the plain truth is that no intercity rail passenger system will ever fully capture the potential market in this country until we cure problems associated with poor track, obsolete equipment, inadequate funding, and the like. As noted above, an intercity rail system is a public service and not a for-profit operation. Once this fact is recognized, and once some serious political judgments are made with respect to the nature of the service to be provided to the American public, then funding levels can be realistically established. If and when funding is fixed to achieve a realistic service goal, then and only then will Amtrak be able to chart a meaningful course for the future.

C. CONCLUSION

Precise measurements of the value of any public service are difficult to achieve; this is true with Amtrak. There are real and substantial public benefits that accrue from the operation of Amtrak.

Increasing congestion in the air and highway modes is a fact. Amtrak does serve to alleviate this problem, particularly in, but not limited to the Northeast Corridor. This alone emphasizes the importance of providing the traveling public with a choice of modes.

Allied to the provision of relieving congestion is the major benefit that railroad right-of-way, with its enormous capacity, saves from the alternate consumption of land to serve other modes. An additional value is the undisputed potential available for energy efficiency associated with increased utilization of rail passenger transportation.

Also, in the mind of this Board, there is no doubt that in time of national emergency the services and facilities of a nationwide rail passenger service would be called upon to support the national security.

Last, but not least, rail passenger service is acknowledged to be the safest way to travel; it will remain so.

For this and other reasons, there is a clearly expressed national desire to maintain a national rail passenger service. There is a sense of national pride which desires that service to be of superior quality.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

NORTH COAST HIAWATHA eastbound to Chicago derailed one engine and 12 cars on Dec 12 just west of the Missoula MT station. There were 68 people aboard and no reported injuries. Sources indicated that the cause of the derailment may have been a broken wheel on a heater car. The two locomotives and all cars but one remained upright, while a sleeper tilted to one side. The train was slowing at the time, entering the city limits. Amtrak arranged for alternate transportation for the passengers. A makeup train was run from Minneapolis to Chicago on Dec 13 for local passengers, using one engine and two coaches.....

A NOVEMBER DERAILMENT of the westbound EMPIRE BUILDER just west of Easton WA (not reported here previously) was reportedly caused by a broken axle on one of the F40 diesel locomotives. The train crew had spotted sparks and rail damage and were slowing to a stop when the axle snapped, in an area of double track. An investigation was said to have shown that the train had traveled at least 20 miles with the defective axle, many of those miles in a 70mph zone.....

* * *

BUDD COMPANY OFFICIALS are reported recently to have asked Amtrak if the corporation wants any more Amfleet cars within the near future. If not, Budd plans to disassemble much of the specialized equipment used to build the 492-car Amfleet order, due to a shortage of space at its factory. As of December, there has been little interest reported at Amtrak for more of the fuselage-type cars.....

"SUPERTRAIN" TELEVISION SPECIAL has been delayed until Feb 7. Previously the broadcast was scheduled for Jan 29..... AMTRAK CHRISTMAS RIDERSHIP seems to have set a record, altho no official figures are in yet. An Amtrak spokesman said rail travel was "extremely heavy". Locally, we found the COAST STARLIGHT completely sold out around Christmas. A Berkeley woman we know took her first Amtrak train trip in December, from here to New Mexico and back. The first thing that happened was that the STARLIGHT was 2 hours late from Seattle, and Amtrak put her on the SAN JOAQUIN and bused her from Bakersfield to Barstow to connect with the SOUTHWEST LIMITED. Despite this problem beginning, she was so sold on train travel that she "didn't want to get off" when the train pulled into Oakland at the end of her adventure. She enjoyed every minute of it, she said, especially the camaraderie aboard the trains, and is now an enthusiastic Amtrak supporter.....

* * *

A ROUGH DAY for Amtrak was Sunday, Dec 10 in the Chicago area. A boiler in the former Santa Fe Coach Yard at 21st Street exploded, causing serious problems for conventional cars using steam. (There were no injuries.) Temperatures were around zero all day, and the low was 7 below, a tied record. The steam plant was shut down from 11am, resulting in frozen cars. Serious problems with the LONE STAR delayed its departure until about 6:15pm, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR left about 9pm, and the SOUTHWEST LIMITED didn't get out until about 10:45pm. Then a frozen switch about 10 miles outside Chicago was blamed for a 3-hour delay to the CARDINAL, train 51, which reached Chicago about 8:50pm. Floods and high waters in and around Bowling Green KY forced Amtrak to cancel the FLORIDIAN, train 57, and bus passengers to Nashville. Plans were to hold train 56 at Nashville and turn it there for the return trip. And locomotive problems at the 12th Street Coach Yard (former Penn Central) caused the PANAMA LIMITED, train 59, to leave Chicago about 8:15pm, because of a burned-out relay in the second locomotive.....

RENO FUN TRAIN will operate in 1979, its 15th year for the special Oakland CA to Reno NV train. It will leave Oakland Friday evenings at 6:30pm, with stops at Richmond, Martinez and Sacramento, and reach Reno after midnight. At 11am on Sunday it leaves Reno for the return. The train features a dance car with live band each direction. Departure dates from Oakland are: Jan 26, Feb 2, 9, 23; Mar 2, 9, 23, 30; Apr 6.....

AMTRAK'S GG-1 LOCOMOTIVES geared for 100mph have been removed from service following four instances of driver tires coming off the engines at high speed. This happened on train 82, the SILVER STAR, on Metroliner 106, and others. The fourth incident was with GG-1 #902 on Nov 26, and the next day a speed restriction of 80mph top was placed on the GG-1's. Ten 100mph GG-1's have been withdrawn, including famous engine 4935. The result will be late schedules on 12 Metroliners now being pulled by GG-1's and using Amfleet equipment while the Metroliners are rebuilt--trains 104, 105, 106, 107, 113, 114, 115, 116, 122, 123, 124, and 125..... FIRST REBUILT METROLINER reportedly suffered an electrical fire and is in the Wilmington shop..... A SUPERLINER COACH, unpainted and unlettered, was spotted in the Enola PA yard on Nov 27..... THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY plans to scrap 5 cars involved in the Dec 3 derailment of the CRESCENT--cars 704, 833, 818, 2353, and 3311. Engines 6906 and 6910 will also be scrapped.....

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THE ROCK ISLAND'S Chicago-Peoria ROCK ISLAND ROCKET runs will be taken over by Amtrak--the word is now official. Amtrak and the Illinois Dept. of Transportation on Dec 6 reached an agreement in principle to operate a Chicago-Peoria passenger service which will run on the ICG from Chicago to Chenoa and then over the Toledo, Peoria & Western Railroad to Peoria. The startup date has not been announced yet. It is believed that the train would leave Chicago at 5 or 5:30pm and arrive in Chicago between 9:30 and 10am, with a trip time of about 3½ hours, compared to the present Rock Island time of 4½ hours. State subsidies to Rock Island for the service ended at the end of December. The new train will be a half-state-supported operation. The routing agreed upon eliminates the need for a $2 million rail connection at Chillicothe discussed earlier. About $250,000 in startup costs are estimated, for a portable Amtrak station in East Peoria and some upgrading to the TP&W track..... THE MARDI GRAS fun trains will see their fourth year of operation this year, to the Mardi Gras festival in New Orleans. The tour from Los Angeles will leave Feb 20, Amtrak said. There are also traditionally Chicago departures..... A SUPERLINER REPORT: Amtrak expects to accept its second and third bi-level coaches the first week of January. The cars are now expected to go into revenue service probably in May, said an Amtrak spokesman. RTN has been told that there is a growing uneasiness at Amtrak headquarters that Amtrak may never see the complete Superliner order. Pullman Standard seems to be losing a lot of money on the order, as the company did on the New York subway car order. Even some management personnel at Pullman Standard reportedly believe that P-S wants out of the railroad passenger car business, and might even seek to terminate the Superliner contract with only 68 cars now under construction. Others have suggested that the cars be completed only as coaches. Meanwhile, the Budd Company has offered Amtrak plans for a long-distance train based on the Amfleet body shell.....

* * *

THE SOUTHERN CRESCENT takeover agreement between Amtrak and Southern Railway was announced Dec 13, as forecast in our last issue. Takeover date is Feb 1, and the railroad will pay Amtrak $6,674,812 in eight monthly installments as part of the agreement. Amtrak President Boyd said that initial changes to the operation and staffing would be minimal and that the train would continue to operate with Southern equipment and employees. Equipment requirements will be covered by a lease arrangement with Southern for locomotives and a lease-purchase program for cars required by Amtrak to operate the service. The contract preserves Amtrak's statutory right of access for additional service on the railway. Specifically, it guarantees the FLORIDIAN access to the SR station in Atlanta if Amtrak re-routes it. The re-routing decision will not be made until after the final DOT plan is published. For the rest of this fiscal year, Feb 1 thru Sep 30, cost to Amtrak of operating the train is estimated at $11 million, with $5 million of that covered by revenues and the remainder by SR's buy-in payments to Amtrak.....

THE NATIONAL LIMITED, train 31, was delayed several hours on Dec 23 10 miles from its Kansas City destination by a disabled Missouri Pacific freight train.....

BROADWAY LIMITED TIMEKEEPING has improved, with the train now running regularly within 30mins of its schedule. At the same time, the LAKE SHORE LIMITED's timekeeping has suffered substantially, mostly because of engine failures and some steam failures..... THE SOUTHERN CRESCENT operated by Amtrak will not carry a Master Room lounge car, it is reported..... THE EMPIRE BUILDER was traveling at 85mph westbound only one mile from the Pasco WA depot on a November day, while making up time, and a rapid brake application flattened most wheels on the train. If the train had not stopped in time, it probably would have derailed on a curve at the west end of the depot platform. The repair bill for the flattened wheels was reported as $64,000. The damaged train proceeded slowly to Yakima, where passengers were transfered to buses..... A PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL engineer has been fired, according to reports, for failure to heed "speeding" warnings. The train had been found to be exceeding speed limits at Marysville WA, north of Everett.....

UNITED AIRLINES JETLINER crashed in a residential area of Portland OR Dec 28, killing 10 people. By a "miracle" 175 others aboard survived. The West Coast was still reeling from the aftermath of the Sep 25 crash of an airliner in San Diego that killed 144--the worst air disaster in U.S. history. Airline travel is up sharply due to the Carter administration's policies of deregulation of air fares. The plane to Portland had come from New York via Denver, following the route of the PIONEER and SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR that the DOT seeks to eliminate...

THE AMTRAK ARTWORK above was seen on a BLUE WATER LIMITED brochure.....

PRESIDENT ALAN BOYD of Amtrak was seen riding on the PIONEER in early December. RTN continues to receive reports that Boyd is doing a very good job in the hot-seat at Amtrak. Some sources at Amtrak headquarters say that Boyd and other top execs are considering using Amtrak's power, mandated by Congress, to force operation of Amtrak trains over any track which Amtrak wishes to use, despite railroad objections. The SP's Tehachapi Pass route could become one of the first to see Amtrak exercise its power..... THE AMTRAK BOARD gets a report at its next meeting in late Jan on the feasibility of combining conventional and Superliner cars. Amtrak denies our report of last issue, stating that it has no such program in operation yet.....

* * *

RAIL STRIKE THREAT looms after Jan 14 in the dispute between the clerks union and the N&W. If a presidential emergency board report is found unacceptable, a strike could be called. It's the same dispute that resulted in a strike late last September..... THE BLACK HAWK was terminated at Freeport IL on Dec 12 and passengers bused on when an ICG freight derailment knocked out the Galena River Bridge..... AN EXCELLENT ARTICLE, favorable to Amtrak, written by Albert Karr, appeared in the Wall Street Journal Dec 21. Reporting from Minot ND, Mr. Karr notes that the biggest group to attend the recent ICC hearings on the proposed Amtrak cutbacks--nearly 600--was in Minot..... NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE'S December issue carries a color photo of the CP Rail CANADIAN, spread across two pages, and an interior shot of another train, in an article on Ontario.....

NORTHWESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD is still severed as a result of a tunnel fire at Island Mountain CA, favorite rail photographers' location when pre-Amtrak passenger service operated. Owner SP made a study of possible abandonment of the NWP and concluded it would pay to rebuild the tunnel. Morrison-Knudsen began the work in November, expected to take at least 3 months. SP has freight cars and locomotives isolated north of the break, and shipping them by ocean from Eureka was found too costly. Fire was on Sep 6.....

DOT'S FINAL REPORT on the Amtrak cutback plan, due Dec 31, has been delayed until the latter part of January. The OMB proposal to cut Amtrak's budget even beyond the DOT's proposed level, reported last issue, was the subject of intense discussion between DOT Secretary Adams and OMB head McIntyre. It is reported that Adams convinced the OMB that the higher $550 million budget that the DOT wanted should be approved. Or more correctly, Adams failed to convince the OMB and went directly to President Carter, who intervened with OMB. What Amtrak is highly concerned about now is that OMB still insists that the operating budget must include labor protection payments to displaced workers when routes are discontinued, and those payments could run into a lot of money. The Washington Post reports that Adams's stature is up with the Carter administration and that he is once more acting like a "permanent fixture", after reports that he would be allowed to resign. Carter reportedly said that Adams had "done very well". This recent achievement was what allowed him to go directly to Carter to fight for the Amtrak budget. The $550 million is still $60 million less than the present fiscal year, and $115 million less than what Amtrak asked for.....

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SENATOR GARY HART of Colorado has urged the ICC to deny the D&RGW's petition to cut back the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR. He also told the ICC and Amtrak that if the petition is approved, Amtrak should be directed to re-route the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR over the D&RGW route. RTN has learned that the Mormon Church, a heavy stockholder in the D&RGW, urges Utah officials not to oppose the cutback.....

THE KEYSTONE ASSOCIATION of RR Passengers (Harrisburg PA) has called for the federal government to fund a $350 million program to purchase 400 new passenger cars for Amtrak to to rebuild old cars. The consumer group issued the call "in response to a record number of passengers carried by Amtrak over Thanksgiving, including over 15,000 who stood on trains because seats weren't available".....

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION in late December adopted policy guidelines to encourage railroad mergers..... REMAINING F UNITS owned by Amtrak, assigned to Seattle, have been helping the COAST STARLIGHT on the Seattle-Portland leg over BN tracks. Consists are pulled backwards both ways between Seattle and Portland as repairs to the damaged BN Willamette River Bridge have not been completed. The PIONEER also runs backwards between those two points..... SANTA FE'S TOPEKA shops, said Amtrak sources in late December, have started converting the ex-Santa Fe hi-level Amtrak cars to dual-service utility functions--that is, the cars will be able to operate with both steam or all-electric heating. The cars coming out of this shop are said to be painted in Superliner stripes..... SEVERAL CARS INVOLVED in the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA derailment of Dec 12 (see p.15) have been taken to Seattle for storage and inspection. They are: 1591, dome 9361 "Ocean View", dome 9467, 4518, 4862, and 2676 "Silver Ravine". The sleeper which overturned saw no injuries, as there were no passengers aboard it.....

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A "BERSERK" PASSENGER on the eastbound SOUTHWEST LIMITED was shot and killed by police officers at Hutchinson KS on Dec 15 after he got off the train and fired at the officers. Amtrak said he fired a gun at a porter and conductor on the train and at one point set himself on fire. He was identified as Edward Smith, from California..... FEDERAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION Act of 1978 (Nov 6), an amendment to the UMTA Act of 1964, authorizes the Secretary of Transportation to make grants "for the initiation, improvement, or continuation of intercity bus service" for places of 5000 population or more. The law requires that the DOT evaluate the needs of the bus industry and report to Congress by Sep 30, 1979.....

AUTO-TRAIN CORPORATION will reportedly sell between 36 and 40 cars to Mexico for the service it is promoting there..... THE MILWAUKEE ROAD has posted abandonment notices for all track west of Newcomb MT..... CONRAIL HAS CONCEDED that it can tolerate as many as 5 passenger train round trips daily on the East Coast's "Inland Route".....

News in this issue is updated thru Dec 31, 1978.

AMTRAK'S "B" LIST OF PASSENGER CARS

Amtrak recently revised its announced plans for the future of Amtrak's conventional passenger equipment, acquired mostly from railroads that joined Amtrak in 1971. Whereas previously most of the conventional equipment, including all dome cars, was slated for retirement, Amtrak now places each conventional car into an "A" or a "B" category. The "A" list cars are defined by Amtrak: "to be retained for long-range equipment plans." The "B" list definition is "not intended for long-range retention", as of October, 1978.

We present here a list of Amtrak's "B" cars. To compress this large body of information into a small area, we are using the following format: When a series of cars is "B"-listed, we'll print the first and last number of that series, and follow the car numbers with a number in parentheses listing the total number of cars covered in the series. Usually the total number will be smaller than the range of the series numbers, as some cars will usually already have been retired in that series. Cars not covered here should be presumed to be on the "A" list. We apologize in advance for any errors that creep into tabulations of this sort.

1120-1146 (20); 1540 (1); 1590-1 (2); 1603-5 (3); 1750 (1); 2100-5 (3); 2150-4 (5); 2211-20 (8); 2242 (1); 2302-12 (6); 2350-71 (10); 2380-2 (3); 2400-1 (2); 2420 (1); 2501-8 (3); 2521 (1).

2550-61 (9); 2750-62 (12); 2765-97 (29); 2802-16 (7); 3220-8 (5); 3254-60 (2); 3342 (1); 3350-1 (2); 3360-2 (3); 3380-95 (9); 3500 (1); 3800-12 (4); 3870-1 (2); 3925-70 (10); 4401-9 (8); 4460-2 (3); 4470-4547 (43).

4886 (1); 5226-5407 (31); 5440-5473 (19); 5601-18 (12); 6035-58 (5); 6077-7200 (23); 8030-2 (3); 8034-44 (11); 8070-89 (9); 8101-7 (7); 8200-1 (2); 8350-4 (5); 8399-8401 (3); 9310 (1); 9350-9355 (6); 9371-9374 (4); 9801 (1); 10502-3 (2); 10600-4 (5). Note: All Metroliners and Amfleet cars are "A"-listed.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"The passenger train is not alone in having its revenues exceeded by its costs. The air and highway modes also have substantial losses on the operation of their physical facilities. ...transportation is an expensive business and...all three modes are subsidized in one form or another..."

--From Preferred Plan for Eastern Transcontinental Passenger Train Service, Canadian Transport Commission, Dec. 1978.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Amtrack Says Rails Needs More Money."

--Headline in San Francisco Chronicle, Dec 14.

(Who is this guy Rails, and who is Amtrack?)

"WASHINGTON--The Carter administration has decided on a fiscal 1980 operating subsidy for Amtrak of about $550 million, about $60 million less than provided in fiscal 1979, administration sources said.

"That's about what the Transportation Department's budget officials, who at one point wanted to cut much deeper."

--Wall Street Journal, Dec 29.

(Would you repeat that last sentence?)

The people at Rail Travel News would like to take this opportunity to wish you and all those about you the happiest of holiday seasons and success and prosperity in the new year. Happy rail traveling!

EDITORIAL

Our esteem for the New York Times, our favorite newspaper, has taken a nose-dive with the publication of its editorial, "Train subsidies off the track" on Dec 17. We were greatly dismayed to see this editorial giant suddenly mouthing the cliches that so many Washington bureaucrats mouth--about only a few "corridors" being worthy of public assistance, about the "intercity buses that get along without subsidies", about the implication that airlines aren't subsidized. And the thoughtless and uninformed remarks about the "sprawling" passenger system (our nation is "sprawling", and does that make it bad?), and the nonexistent "parlor car" thru the Rockies.

An uninformed public tends to believe garbage like this when it's in print, and one expects the New York Times to keep its public informed. Maybe that editorial writer needs to read RTN to get the real story behind the cliches. Up in Canada, thoughtful and civilized analysts admit that all three transportation modes receive subsidies (see Quotes of the Week). Those who influence public policy in the U.S. should make themselves as informed before they speak out.

The editorial writer would do well to read an article in his own newspaper's magazine section section of Nov 19. In it, Seymour Melman ("Beating 'swords' into subways") convincingly makes the case that "instead of boosting the economy, excessive arms production has boosted inflation and unemployment". And while President Carter is cutting the budget everywhere, he's increasing military spending beyond all reason. Just a little of that money would help the trains a lot.

A MESSAGE ABOUT RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

With this issue RTN comes to the end of its eighth year volume--eight years and one month of publication. The year 1978 was both RTN's worst and best year. It was the worst because numerous problems caused us to lag in publication to the point that we ended the year with only 16 issues instead of 24. The year was our best because our readership reached an all-time high, thanks to a direct-mail advertising campaign we were able to begin this year. And our influence reached an all-time high; it was very gratifying to be able to see that our efforts were actually bearing fruit as we tried to keep people aware of the important train news in this critical year of threatened cutbacks and nationwide citizen hearings on the fate of our rail system.

To the many kind readers who bore with our problems and offered us praise and assistance, we are very grateful. We look forward to 1979 being a very good year both for the passenger trains and for those who read and write about them.

CRESCENT DERAILMENT (continued from page 10)

Cook Ned Haynes of Atlanta was severely injured when he was pinned from the waist down under a stove for 11 hours. The lead locomotive, which did not derail, stopped about a half mile ahead of the rest of the train. It and the last 3 cars remained upright, and the remainder of the train overturned and suffered major damage. The consist of the derailed train was: engines 6909, 6902, 6906, 6910 (all E8 units), baggage dorm 704, coach 833, sleeper-lounge 2353 "Crescent Shores", diner 3311, coach 818, sleeper 2021 "Yadkin River", sleeper 2023 "Warrior River", and SR office car #1. The derailment occurred on a 45mph speed limit 5-degree downhill curve, and initial reports were that the train was traveling at about 80mph. The investigation into the accident will not be completed for several months. Southern Railway borrowed equipment from Amtrak to make up the consist of train 1 from Washington on Dec 3. That consist follows: engine Atk 602, baggage Atk 1203, coaches SR 830 & SR 835, coach-lounge SR 950, diner-lounge Atk 8301, sleepers SR 3400, SR 2008, coach SR 828, sleeper SR 2012. The train was detoured over the RF&P to Richmond, the SCL to Raleigh, and over an SR branch line from Raleigh to Greensboro.

RAIL FANTRIPS

May 12-13, 1979: "A Night on the SUPER CHIEF" elegant recreation of 1st night out on luxury train. Chicago-Kansas City RT, exclusive occupancy & limited capacity. SASE to 20th Century RR Club, PO Box A3258, Chicago IL 60690.

Apr 28-29: First reunion of psgrs who rode any part of Amtrak 4449 steam trip in 1977, at Ft. Lauderdale FL. Visitors Passes for those who didn't ride. Contact Paul Wilson, Box 816, Immokalee FL 33934.

Mar 17-18: 30th Anniversary of CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR. Denver-Grand Junction RT on RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR. $43, child $16.25. SASE to NRHS Intermountain Chap., PO Box 5181 Terminal Annex, Denver CO 80217. (Accompanying adult on family plan, $32.25.)

Every weekend in Jan, Feb, Mar: Rio Grande Ski Train, Denver-Winter Park CO, RT coach excursion $6.50. Lv Denver 7:35am, ar Winter Park 10am; lv Winter Park 4pm. NRHS day on ski train, Feb 4. See address above. Phone 303-623-6747.

One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send full info to: Rail Travel News, Fantrips Dept., PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

CARS & CONSISTS

*SILVER METEOR, train 83, New York Dec 23: engines two GG-1's (nos. unknown); cars 1416, 2534 "Robin", 2531 "Cardinal", 2698, 2680, 3201 "Woodland Stream", 8063, 8018, 3333, 4419, 4423, 4583, 4571, 4578, 5802, 4436, 5454, 5626, 5433.

*CHAMPION, train 85, same: engines 927, 4890 (GG-1's); 1428, 2032 "Loch Rannoch", 2686, 2707 "Bradenton", 3204 "Swift Stream", 8003, 8012, 3335, 4408, 4431, 4562, 4441, 4596, 4416, 4406, 4413, 5458, 4440.

*BROADWAY LIMITED, train 41, same: engine Conrail 4934 (GG-1); cars 1184, 1268, 1156, 2025 "Loch Leven", 2797 "Middle River", 2832 "Keene Valley", 8026, 3800, 5421, 5404, 5415, 5412, 5671, 5417.

*NATIONAL LIMITED, train 31, Kansas City Dec 25: engines 427 (E), 263 (F40PHR); cars 1253, 1240, 2923 "Pacific Park", 20209 (food car), 21829, 21812, 21814, 21055, 21050, 21087, 21803.

*NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, train 18, Seattle Dec 22: engines 244, 241 (F40PHR's); heater cars 670, 660; cars 2261 "Placid Harbor", 2674 "Silver Channel", 2656 "Silver Crag", 8096, dome 9813 "Silver Cup" (backwards), 4540, dome 9453 "Silver Ranch", 4543, dome 9454 "Silver Rifle", 4550, 1513, 1216, 1247.

*MOUNT RAINIER, train 797, Seattle Dec 17: engines 235 (F40PHR), 228 (F40); cars 21197, 21195, Amcafe 20042, 21194, 21182, 21175, Amcafe 20038, 21181, 21180, 21110, Amcafe 20052, 21174, 21199; standing room only, football game crowd.

*VALLEY FORGE, train 43, New York Dec 8: engine 909 (GG-1); cars 6016, 6026, 6022, 6009, 6001, 5680.

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EXPRESS ADS

TRAINS!!! We know them!!! We ride them!!! We sell train tickets!!! Call us for tickets and reservations for your next trip!!! GREAT WESTERN TOURS, 639 Market St., Suite 900, San Francisco 94105. (415) 398-2994. P.S. We sell air tickets, too. Shh!!!

TIMETABLES - Public & Employee New list monthly. SSAE for latest list. Compendium of AMTRAK timetables, 50¢. CARL LOUCKS, 199 Wayland, Hamden CT 06518.

DINING CAR DISHES, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, stationery, rules, metal & Pullman items, annual reports from 30 railroads. Long stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, Kan. 67213. Will buy items.

BUMPER STICKER "Railroaders detect hotboxes" $2.50. Zephyr Pyramid Enterprises, Box 5, El Segundo CA 90245 (Calif. residents add 6% tax).

TROLLEY NOSTALGIA: "Trolley Trails Through the West": Vol. 1 - Yakima, Vol. 2 - Seattle, Vol. 3 - Portland, Vol. 4 - Tacoma, Spokane, Bellingham, etc., Vol. 5 - Montana and Utah $3.00 each. Moneyback guarantee. Wilson Bros. Publications, Box 712RTN, Yakima WA 98907.

Express, Railroad, Steamship, Traction and Trolley uniform buttons. Send $1.00 for list and sample. Joseph Lajoie, 22 Stevens St., Methuen, Mass. 01844.

RTN #180 REPORTED that the former D&H/ATSF ALCO PA diesels have headed south to the National Railways of Mexico. Northwest Rail Images hasn't photographed this yet, but we do offer a 25-slide set titled "Trains of Northern Mexico" that will show prospective visitors what to expect south of the border. Price: $6.25 incl. 1st class postage. Or send 35¢ for a sample slide and list of more than 20 sets including Amtrak, pre-Amtrak and non-Amtrak passenger subjects from Georgia RR's mixeds to the Northern Alberta Rly. to Newfoundland. Yes, we even have some non-passenger subjects. Northwest Rail Images, 4891 Donald Street, Eugene, OR 97405.

RTN reader seeks same for possible "photographic safari" in mid-January to Utah and Colorado to shoot pictures of Rio Grande Zephyr in action. I hope to shoot primarily in areas W. of Grand Junction over a 3 or 4 day period. Could provide auto and seek to share fuel and lodging expenses. Entire project now somewhat flexible, best discussed via phone. Call Paul (213) 256-1703 days after Jan. 1.

Says Swan, "Uncage the (OWL and PUSSY) CAT!!!"

Says Swan, "Dumb CALTRANS, LA County sue decent SANTA FE."

WESTERN RAILROADIANA COLLECTORS' FAIRE, sponsored by National Association of Timetable Collectors on Saturday, February 17, 1979 at Holiday Inn South, 4390 - 47th Ave, Sacramento, CA at Highway 99. Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tables available: Members $10.00. Non-Members $20.00. Admission $1.00. Make room reservations direct with motel. For further information contact: Sydney H. Green, Director, 1132 Commons Drive, Sacramento, CA 95825. Phone (916) 922-1230.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads $1.25 per square inch. RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

LETTERS (continued from page 2)

scheme of things and can continue to do so. Rio Grande should consider a basic economic fact before proceeding with its abandonment plans; the industry, composed of firms that have accepted the "conventional wisdom", has an abysmally low 1% rate of return on invested capital. The entrenched ideas of railroad managers clearly have not provided the right answers.

Stephen Linde
New York, New York